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ABSTRACT

Five prominent issues in quantitative sociolinguistic discussions of speaker classification are summarized and discussed, and a case study that attempts to extend the available methodology is examined. The five issues include the following: (1) to what extent are speaker categories emic or etic? (2) do speaker categories encode local inter-speaker relationships? (3) can speaker categories combine with accounts of interactional language use and learning? (4) do speaker categories handle flexibility and multiplicity as features of group membership? and (5) are interactive and referential group affiliation analytically distinguished? Some of the ways that quantitative research has handled several of these questions are considered, and it is suggested that questions 4 and 5 currently present the greatest empirical challenge. A methodology capable of overcoming those two problems is outlined and illustrated with a case study investigating the distribution of two phonological variables across one multi-ethnic adolescent peer group. Its relation to the first three issues is closely examined, and it is suggested that in comparison with other empirical endeavors, this approach does significantly extend the methodological repertoire of quantitative sociolinguistics. (Author/MSE)

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GROUP AFFILIATION AND QUANTITATIVE SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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Abstract

This paper initially summarises five questions which now figure quite prominently in quantitative sociolinguistic discussions of speaker classification: (1) how far are speaker categories emic or etic? (2) do they encode local inter-speaker relationships? (3) can they combine with accounts of interactional language use and learning? (4) do they handle flexibility and multiplicity as features of group membership? and (5) are interactive and referential group affiliation analytically distinguished? It considers the ways in which quantitative research has handled some of these but not others, and suggests that (4) and (5) currently present the greatest empirical challenge.

A methodology capable of overcoming (4) and (5) is then outlined and illustrated with a case study which investigated the distribution of two phonological variables across one multi-ethnic adolescent peer group. Its relation to (1), (2) and (3) is closely examined, and it is suggested that in comparison with other empirical endeavours, this approach does significantly extend the methodological repertoire of quantitative sociolinguistics.

0. INTRODUCTION*

The first part of this paper reiterates some important issues in quantitative sociolinguistic discussion of speaker classification. In the next, it sketches a research case study which attempts to extend the methodological repertoire of quantitative sociolinguistics so that its empirical tools draw alongside its conceptual deliberations on this theme. Finally, an assessment of the case study is presented.

1.1 DISCUSSIONS ABOUT SPEAKER CLASSIFICATION IN QUANTITATIVE SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Speaker categorisation has been extensively debated by sociolinguists and discussion of the problems associated with group scoring and composite indices can probably be taken as read (see eg Milroy 1980, 1987a; Hudson 1980). However other issues have been raised which it is worth here attending to in more detail. The first of these concerns the status of the group

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categories chosen as extralinguistic variables: are these etic observer classifications or do they represent categorisations operative within the communities being studied (Milroy 1980:40)? A second (and closely related) issue focuses on the degree to which the labels attached to speakers encode the empirical local ties in which they're actually embedded. The characterisation of speakers in terms of class, gender and ethnicity gives an indication of the speaker's social relatedness at only an abstract level, in terms of a general theory of society: speakers have a social life as coins (of different though predetermined value) in some currency system selected/invented by the analyst and their identity is likely to be relational only within an a priori framework (see Gal 1979:Ch 5; Bortoni-Ricardo 1985:70). This leads into a third question: how far do the social categories used give empirical leverage on interactional language use and acquisition (Gal 1979; Edwards 1986:127)? Analysis of speakers as isolated units lends itself to a primarily intra-mental and psycholinguistic approach to speech processing and this has given rise to severe and justified criticism of 'secular linguistic' accounts of verbal style (Gal 1979:8,9; Brown & Levinson 1979). Indeed, failure to handle the dyad as the minimal social unit of stylistic analysis has permitted (along with other factors) a view that interactional sociolinguistics and quantitative studies of speech distribution might be separate and incompatible fields (Gumperz 1982:26).

These three questions have coincided with important new emphases in empirical methodology (for example network analysis and participant observation within fairly small groups), but it is not so often that studies succeed on all three counts and below I shall try to show how weakness in one of these areas can undermine efforts in the others.

Before that however, it is necessary to refer to a fourth very prominent issue on the sociolinguistic agenda - this is LePage and Tabouret-Keller's concern with group belonging as a flexible, fluid and multi-form cognitive phenomenon. (1) In comparison with the other three issues, as yet this has received little empirical attention and certainly hasn't been satisfactorily resolved (McEntaggart & LePage 1982:123; LeP & T-K 1985:180; Milroy 1987b:115). Indeed failure to handle this issue contributes another strand to the case for the segregation of interactional from quantitative sociolinguistics (Gumperz 1982). Instead, this has been most fully addressed within the social psychology of language by Giles and his associates (eg Johnson & Giles 1981).

1.2 Giles, Milroy and Two Notions of Group

So far then, we have pointed to four questions which are prominent in discussions of speaker classification:

(i) how far are the speaker categories emic or etic?
(ii) how far do they encode inter-speaker relationships

as these occur in particular socio-cultural contexts?
(iii) what scope do they give for combination with accounts of interactional language use and acquisition?
(iv) how far do they reckon with flexibility and multiplicity as features of category membership?

Their importance can be gauged when we look at the light that they throw on the canonical work of both Giles and Milroy.

Giles' work looks principally problematic by the first and second criteria. Speakers and collectivities are generally given only broad class/age/sex/ethnic/occupational designations, with the result that they can be said to possess recognised social histories only to the extent that such general classifications adequately describe the social experience of the people inside them. Without specified histories of social interaction, there is also no sense of the subculturally particular communicative practices which these generate (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 1982), and group for Giles is important not for its cultural legacy but rather as a key cognitive unit in the 'on-line' processing of speech. Giles' notion of the sociolinguistic automaton may be an appropriate characterisation of Milroy's speakers: however as perhaps he himself might concede (Giles & Ryan 1982), his own speakers tend to be sociolinguistic and cultural non-entities.

Problems in Milroy's work (1980,1987b) can be traced back to the first and fourth questions. Firstly there is no detailed evidence of a correspondence between locally defined identities, roles and settings on the one hand, and on the other, the way that community life is segmented in order to construct indices of network involvement. As a result the network scores with which speakers are characterised can only be viewed as analytic, and this creates problems of theoretical interpretation. The most serious of these concerns norm-enforcement, the principle proposed as the main link between network and interactional language use. One instance of this is reported (1980:60-1) in which a Ballymacarrett youngster adopts a less vernacular phonological style and is rebuked by his friends for doing so. It may be that this group does indeed have a sense of collective identity but it can't be assumed that the identity being threatened is co-terminous with the residential proximity, kinship, gender, and occupational co-participations which are represented in the network indices. The network measure subsumes a host of different identities (1980:115) and it is possible that the incident in question hinges on a sense of group belonging largely alien or even opposed to most of the people in the neighbourhood (1980:61). The central point is that norm-enforcement exists in relation to the values which people adopt as they shift between the multiple identities available to them, and thus norm-enforcement is a complex socio-cognitive activity which requires much more delicate analysis if attempts are to be made to portray it empirically.

In fact in the process of identifying limitations in the work of Giles and Milroy, ways of combining their approaches start to emerge and these become clearer when we consider the rather different notions of group with which each is operating. Indeed these two separate notions of group are quite frequently remarked on in sociolinguistics.

In the first, 'group' is conceived in concrete terms of who interacts with whom, probably within a shared locality (Fishman's interaction networks and experiential group-membership (1972)). In the second sense, 'group' is viewed as a psychological construct and any given group acquires its definition from the relations of contrast and complementarity that it forms with others around it. Fishman describes this as referential group-membership and in contrast to the first notion, group membership in this conceptualisation must be an insider perception. In the interactive sense, the 'groupness' or unity of a set of people can be something merely attributed to them by the researcher, since people may interact frequently with little sense of felt collectivity.

Clearly Milroy's concern is with interactive group-membership, while Giles' focus is on the referential.

As far as I know, no quantitative studies have sustained this distinction empirically and this is a pity because it obviously has importance at both macro and micro sociolinguistic levels: returning for instance to Milroy's work, the insertion of a working notion of referential group alignment would provide empirical access to questions of language, solidarity and norm-enforcement, and it would also help to dispel a determinism implicit in the model as currently formulated (cf Romaine 1981:111-4; Bortoni-Ricardo 1985:82). More specifically, it would provide a way of expanding the account to accomodate the proverbial wisdom that 'familiarity breeds contempt'.

In short the momentum of this discussion is to add a fifth issue to the list of questions being asked about speaker-categorisation in quantitative sociolinguistics:

(v) how far is group-membership defined in terms of interactional association held analytically distinct from psycho-social category identification?

To this however a counter-question proposes itself: are the bounds of empirical practicability being exceeded here? My answer to this is no, and the next part of this paper describes a case study attempt to extend the methodological repertoire of quantitative sociolinguistics so that it can empirically cope not only with the dynamic and multiform aspects of group membership but also with the differing linguistic effects of group affiliation in its interactive and referential forms.

2.0 AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

The focus of this study was upon the use of two phonological variables by a group of 17 twelve to fourteen year old British boys of Afro-Caribbean (2), Anglo (3), Mixed (1), Indian (4) and Pakistani (7) descent, all living in one neighbourhood of a town in the South Midlands.

The first of the independent variables looked at the extent to which each youngster had multiplex network ties with kids from ethnic outgroups. The second independent variable concentrated on the extent to which individuals saw themselves as similar or different to the people and groups around them. The dependent linguistic variables were post-vocalic (l) in preconsonantal and word-final environments and word-initial voiced TH (for a full account of the research, see Rampton 1987).

2.1 Developing Measures of Group Affiliation as both Network Association and Psycho-Social Identification

In view of the 5 questions above - and particularly the last - there were at least two design requirements for any network indices that I constructed:

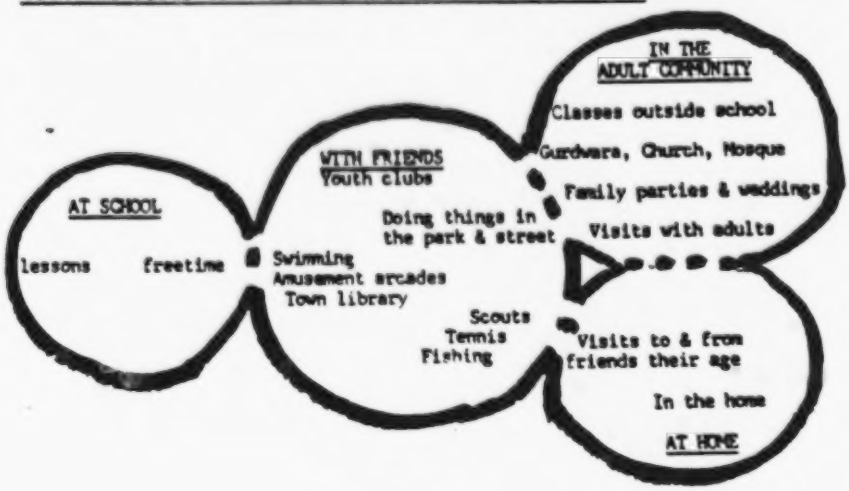
(i) if some form of sociometric naming technique was used, it was important to ensure that reported friendships were actual rather than merely desired (otherwise the network measure would end up reflecting referential rather than interactive group affiliation);
(ii) if the empirical research was to feed into theoretical discussion of language-network relationships, any indices it used needed to be tied to reasonably coherent suggestions about their cognitive significance.

To handle the first, a number of steps were taken both during and after fieldwork. To cope with the second - to try to connect the network measure with some fairly specific hypotheses about its psychological relevance - initially an empirical model of sociolinguistic domains was constructed (see Diagram 1). After that, multiplex interactional relationships were defined as those which occurred in 3 or more domains. In practice, this meant that with cross-ethnic relationships in particular, the focus was on friends being admitted into their associate's intra-ethnic domains, so that in principle an extra dimension was being added to their knowledge and experience of each other, and maybe their apprehension of differing cultural systems was being extended to another realm. Finally, after this attempt to adumbrate the kind of understanding that multiplexity entailed here, % scores were used to show how far each informant had multiplex ties with kids of Pakistani, Anglo, Afro-Caribbean and Indian parentage.

To find out how the knowledge and experience implied in these network indices might have shaped an informant's loyalties, aspirations and sense of their own group-belonging, it was then

necessary to move from the interactive to the referential notion of group.

DIAGRAM 1 : FOUR DOMAINS FOR BOYS OF SOUTH ASIAN PARENTAGE, WITH THE SETTINGS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH GO WITH EACH



To do this, I used Identity Structure Analysis (ISA), an elicitation procedure developed by the social psychologist Peter Weinreich (cf Weinreich 1980). This gives an idea of how far individuals see themselves as similar to or different from the people and groups around them, and in general its quite sophisticated conceptual idiom looks remarkably close to LePage and Tabouret-Keller's (eg 1985; cf Rampton 1986, 1987).

As an empirical procedure, ISA in this research involved two semi-structured interviews focussing on each informant's personal and local social lives. From these, a list was made up of the evaluative dimensions (='constructs') that had seemed important to each informant, and these were then used in a pencil and paper procedure in which they rated the people and groups known to them. After this, data were fed into a computer programme which produced a wide range of complex indices. I concentrated on the very simplest of these, only one of which requires definition here:

> 'Current identification
> The extent of a person's current identification with another is defined as the degree of similarity between the qualities he attributes to the other, whether "good" or "bad", and those of his current self-image.' (1980:13)

It was also decided to look at each informant's identification with only 6 (out of at least 20) reference groups: 'English kids','Indian kids','Pakistani kids','West Indian kids','co-ethnic adults'and 'teachers'.

Before moving on, it is worth summarising how these two variables stand in relation to one another and to some of our initial questions.

As explored here, referential and interactive group-membership exist in a relation of part to whole. The role of ISA vis-a-vis network analysis is not to measure attitudes versus behaviour, but to try to make explicit one or two of the numerous psycho-social relationships which network analysis encompasses without specifying.

In line with this, we can clarify how each approach relates to language. Given its relatively approximative and socio-cognitively non-specific nature, the value of network analysis must be framed in terms of the rough indication it gives of the range of linguistic items a person is exposed to, and what they're likely to learn and habitually deploy (Afendras 1979:662; LePage's riders (b) & (d) 1980:123-4; Gal 1979:131-2). Links between language and referential group membership can be proposed in more specific terms : identification with a category is likely to influence psychological susceptibility to particular speech models, and interactionally it can be held to affect specific types of linguistic self projection (Gal 1979:15-6; LeP & T-K 1985; Johnson & Giles 1981; Thakerar, Giles & Cheshire 1982).

Both conceptions of group affiliation are then theoretically compatible with models of interactional language use, but that doesn't mean that the indices here are capable of empirically exploring what the connections between group affiliation and interactional language use might actually be (cf Berreman 1972). This study leaves out situation and discourse as analytic levels, and indeed since interaction is likely to be the prime matrix within which both group identity and group tradition are formed and relayed (Sapir 1949:363; Gumperz 1982), the approach here clearly neglects some central issues. Instead the relevance to language of these quantitative network and ISA indices must be conceptualised in more essentialist terms of the indication they're likely to give of the kinds of linguistic residue and disposition that individuals draw from past interactions and bring to those in the present.

In the same way, we can't regard whatever results emerge as an emic portrait of local communicative organisation as this relates to ethnicity. The analysis jumps too many semiotic levels; in addition, the model of domains is being used as a kind of survey yardstick, and ISA computational procedures may well not mirror the psychological processes of informants. These limitations do not invalidate the enterprise as a whole but it is vital to recognise them in order to understand properly what the methodology as a whole can and can't tell us.

Having said that, we can move on to the dependent linguistic variables.

2.2 Linguistic Variables

On the basis of pilot analyses and secondary texts (eg Wells 1973,1982; Gill & Gleason 1963; O'Connor 1973; Agnihotri 1979), four variants of (ɫ) - velarised /l/ in postvocalic preconsonantal or prepausal environments - were identified in terms of the following ethnolinguistic provenances :

VocL	: Vocalic L	: non-standard Anglo
[ɫ]	: lateral with back vowel resonance	: standard Anglo
[l]	: L with frontish vowel tamber	: Caribbean, Indian & Pakistani (Punjabi)
[ɭ]	: retroflex L	: Indian and Pakistani (Punjabi)

This variable provided an economical focus for looking at the career-in-contact of formally different sociolinguistic speech habits. In contrast, the second variable - word initial TH - gave more opportunity to see the confluence and reciprocal affirmation of 'genetically' different but formally similar phonological traditions that can also occur in newly polyethnic societies. Four variants were distinguished :

[ð]	: voiced dental-alveolar fricative	: standard Anglo
[d]	: voiced dental-alveolar stop	: Caribbean, Punjabi, non-standard Anglo
Zero TH		} non-standard Anglo
ZeroTH in post-dental/alveolar environments		}

It was decided to analyse speech from the second of the two ISA interviews, in which informants (in pairs or threes) talked about neighbourhood life.

2.3 Working the Methodology Through

In turning now to results, it is first necessary to outline the kind of imbalance, blurring and non-discreteness characterising the social field being investigated here. Firstly, ethnic backgrounds were not equally represented in the speaker sample. There were comparatively few ethnically Anglo and Afro-Caribbean informants and only one of mixed parentage. Yet this was a natural grouping, and it reflected the use of friendship ties in recruitment. So here was (part of) a social unit with a statistically inconvenient composition of ethnic backgrounds.

Secondly, it became clear that patterns of network association were not mirrored by patterns of group identification. In general, multiplex peer group ties were mainly co-ethnic and not many outgroup friends crossed into intra-ethnic domains. In contrast, data on psycho-social identification suggested that informants generally didn't

identify strongly with ingroup peers to the exclusion of others. Most of the informants spread their strongest identifications across 2 or more groups.

Thirdly, analysis of the use of (ɬ) and (ɫ) in terms of ethnicity fixed at birth showed that there were no ethnically exclusive variants. Vocalic L was for example used a lot by non-Anglos, while amongst Anglos themselves, there were both clear and retroflex L variants.

Admittedly, non-discrete subgroup patterns of this kind constitute the raison d'etre of quantitative sociolinguistics and it may be tempting to criticise the vagueness here about ethnolinguistic patterning as simply the result of bad sampling. But this would be to contradict part of the momentum of the measures of interactive and referential group membership being developed here. Much of their central gist is to identify the ethnic distribution of linguistic forms not in spite of but by virtue of the overlap and spread of variants across ethnic categories. They aspire to say something much more concrete about the life of linguistic forms in interethnic settings than could ever be achieved by the investigation of 'bio-ethnic' subgroup means. By focussing on intersubgroup connections themselves, they can for example pick out traces of a variant deriving from contact with ethnolinguistic outgroups.

This is illustrated with [d], the plosive variant of TH. In terms of subgroup means, ethnically Pakistani kids seemed to use plosive TH more than the others, but nothing definite could be said (see Table 1). However when [d] was plotted against multiplex peer ties with Pakistani kids, another relationship emerged: the use of this variant by non-Pakistani informants was linked to the extent to which their multiplex associates were Pakistani (see scatterplot 1 ; the r coefficient from a Pearson product moment correlation was in fact 0.86).

The TH variable has been originally chosen in order to see how formally similar but 'genetically' different phonological traditions might fare in contact: although Pakistani kids obviously hadn't exclusively appropriated it, it did look as though they had the most important influence on its use in the multiracial vernacular. The data appeared to show the cross-ethnic ripple effects of plosive TH use amongst ethnically Pakistani kids.

In fact we could also go further with the aid of ISA, and ask whether [d] use amongst ethnically Indian, Afro-Caribbean and Anglo informants was systematically linked to psychosocial identification with Pakistani kids as a group. In the event, there was no evidence of any such connection, and theorisation of the language-network relationship for [d] had to remain couched in broad terms of interpersonal accommodation: there was no empirical justification for reading into it processes at ethnic-category level.

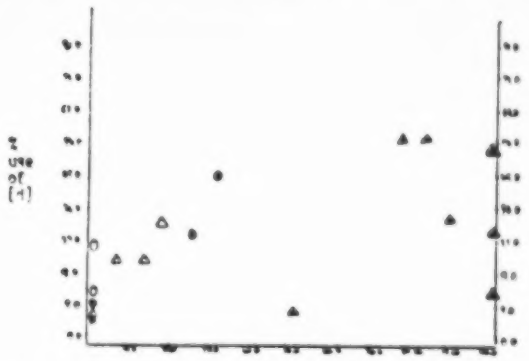
TABLE 1 MEAN % USE OF [d] BY ETHNIC SUBGROUP

	Mean % use of [d]	sm	n
Informants of Indian extraction	20.7	10.1	4
Informants of Pakistani extraction	34.7	18.2	7
Informants of Afro-Caribbean extraction	28.8	14.7	2
Informants of Anglo extraction	19.3	17.9	3

TABLE 2 MEAN % OF USE OF [ɻ] BY ETHNIC SUBGROUP

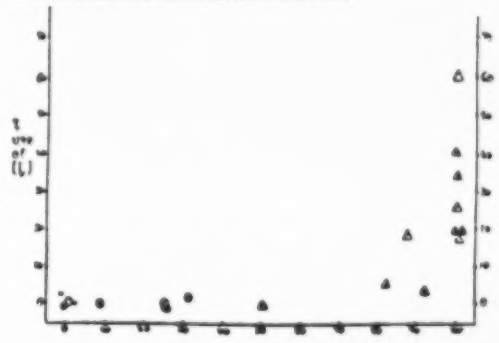
	Mean % use of [ɻ]	sm	n
Informants of Indian parentage	30.9	17.3	4
Informants of Pakistani parentage	18.7	16.6	7
Informants of Afro-Caribbean parentage	0	0	3
Informants of Anglo parentage	0.4	0.9	3

SCATTERPLOT 1 USE OF [d] x MULTIPLEX INTERACTIONAL ASSOCIATION WITH ETHNICALLY PAKISTANI PEERS



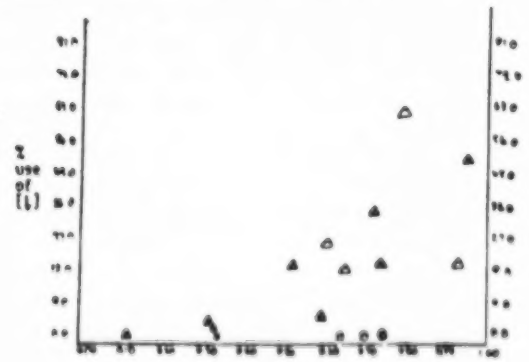
Multiplex interactional association with ethnically Pakistani peers

SCATTERPLOT 2 USE OF RETROFLEX [ɻ] x MULTIPLEX INTERACTIONAL ASSOCIATION WITH PUNJABI BILINGUAL PEERS



Multiplex interactional association with Punjabi bilingual peers

SCATTERPLOT 3 USE OF RETROFLEX [ɻ] x CURRENT IDENTIFICATION WITH INGROUP ADULTS



Current identification with ingroup adults

KEY:

△: informants of Indian parentage
▲: informants of Pakistani parentage
○: informants of Afro-Caribbean parentage
●: informants of Anglo parentage
◐: informant of mixed Anglo-Afro-Caribbean parentage

This progression from analysis of interactive to referential group membership was more substantively illustrated with the case of retroflex [ɭ]. Data on subgroup means had suggested that [ɭ] was on average used more by ethnically Indian and Pakistani informants (Table 2). Then, merging kids of Indian and Pakistani parentage into the single category 'Punjabi bi-lingual', it emerged that [ɭ] use amongst these kids was broadly associated with the extent to which their multiplex peer ties was also Punjabi bi-lingual (scatterplot 2). It was not possible however to go on from this and suggest that [ɭ] usage was a matter of solidarity with Asian kids : the ISA data showed no association between retroflex [ɭ] use and identification with Indian and Pakistani kids. However, amongst ethnically Pakistani informants, a particularly strong association was detectable between [ɭ] use and identification with co-ethnic adults ($r = 0.87$; see also scatterplot 3).

This was significant as an empirical illustration of the fragility of the interpretation of language network correlations in terms of solidarity. Retroflex [ɭ] use might be systematically associated with group solidarity, but the group concerned was plainly not the same as the collectivity reflected in the network measure. To explain the retroflex [ɭ] - peer network association it would be necessary to propose that acquisition and use of [ɭ] followed on from the stronger identification with coethnic adults which exclusively Punjabi multiplex peer groups maybe encouraged. Clearly this study was much too small to address this issue seriously (interaction effects being beyond its statistical scope) but the potential of the methodology for giving empirical access to more complex theoretical reasoning was evidenced.

In fact, this case study also explored other aspects of the methodology - for example it looked at the sociolinguistic impact of identification with interactively remote groups. We can skip these however and move to a final evaluation.

3. ASSESSMENT

We can begin with a brief restatement of the kind of understanding made available by this approach. Since neither network analysis nor ISA have directly addressed situated discourse, nothing substantial can be said about what for example [d] and [ɭ] are used to mean (the symbolic use of language variants can only be studied in particular interactions (Brown & Levinson 1979:325)). Even so, their combination can break down "proxy" variables such as ethnicity and class into constituent elements which can start to connect with the subjectivity necessarily entailed in any link between social organisation and speech. More importantly, the blend here of ISA and network analysis provides empirical access to possible imbalances between a person's interactional location and their responses to this.

Systematic ways of looking at this have not yet been developed in quantitative sociolinguistics.

However, was this methodology absurdly cumbersome and over-elaborate? Admittedly, with the network measure, it was a slow process building up the model of domains and then making a detailed analysis of where people encountered on another, but this was necessary in order to produce a fairly precise working definition of interactional association (see also Gal and Bortoni-Ricardo). In some sociolinguistic studies, the shift away from the a priori models of society entailed in the use of network rather than sociodemographic variables in fact results in their replacement with notions of community which may be almost equally a priori. This certainly occurs with the use of indirect indicators of network involvement (based on work, residence and leisure; cf Milroy 1980, 1987b; Edwards 1986:56-9). These tend to make large assumptions about who sees who where. In addition the conceptualisation of emerging scores in terms of 'levels of community integration' tends to be theoretically and analytically non-generative: interpreting network scores in such a necessarily general way closes off systematic investigation of the effects of different types of network association and means that any further examination of negative findings can only revert to sociodemographic proxy variables. In contrast, more precise measures allow one to specify linguistically insignificant network relations, and then to move on to analyse others.

What of ISA ? Was this too unwieldy? In technical-operational terms, ISA wasn't a lot less economical to organise than the speech evaluation methods which are commonly used by sociolinguists and indeed it had a lot of advantages over them as a way of investigating identification-language relationships (cf Giles & Ryan 1982). With regard to its conceptual rather than technical apparatus, the full vocabulary of ISA may well exceed the practical scope of sociolinguistics, but its more complex reaches can still help to constructively discipline the interpretation of findings obtained through merely elementary uses of it. Even though unoperationalised, immediate access to a conceptual system of this kind may partly counter what may be a microsociolinguistic tendency towards looseness with theory (Fishman 1981:163).

In several ways then, the elaborateness of this methodology can be justified. Certainly there are a lot of questions that still need to be sorted out: how far for example can the interrelation of different types of identification measured by ISA be tied in with language? how far should the comparison between ISA and acts-of-identity sociolinguistics actually be taken? Initially, intensive small scale investigations would probably be best suited to the consideration of these and other issues; however, similar combinations of ISA and NA might also be employed in larger scale sociolinguistic surveys, as long as researchers were content to take more for granted. One of the major practical advantages of the approach here is that given a

minimum level of literacy, it could work equally well with groups defined in terms of class, neighbourhood, gender, occupation etc. Both ego- and group-centred analysis could be achieved, and in principle, ISA and NA could be used together to look at inter-individual relationships. So particularly when quantitative sociolinguistics aspires to develop its connection with extra-linguistic concerns, this methodology can be presented as a valuable step towards a more theoretically adequate but still quantitatively concise account of how group affiliation links with the social distribution of speech variables,

Doubts may remain,however: in particular it might be said that the exercise here has fallen rather awkwardly between two stools, on the one hand treating the purely linguistic dimensions of variation too cursorily, and on the other, neglecting key aspects of ethnolinguistic process (eg by ignoring the interactional enunciation of group affiliation, and by blocking out the symbolic and tropological dialogue around questions of social structural positioning that saturates many sections of the prequantified discourse). If such a line of criticism is adopted, it must however be recognised that its implications may well extend beyond this case study to much of the quantitative sociolinguistic enterprise itself.

The case can I think be made that the methodology outlined above stands at least on the threshold of a fairly literal operationalisation of LePage and Tabouret-Keller's hypothesis and riders (1). In addition, it is clear that for quite a time now, this hypothesis has stood as a beacon, an ideal of sociolinguistic analysis towards which a good deal of quantitative research has orientated itself. Consequently, criticism of this methodology may have ramifications at two levels.

In the first place, viewing this case study as an object that's been brought close up to the light source, we can start to wonder whether the illumination provided by the hypothesis and riders is actually sufficient. Crucial sociolinguistic processes remain obscure, and thus we may well ask whether it's now time to reformulate the hypothesis, giving greater centrality to the dyad, to interaction and to verbal style. At a second level, if this methodology does get close to realising what has so far only been an ideal, does criticism of it as an awkward hybrid in fact signal the onset of a renunciation of efforts to study intergroup processes alongside demographic speech variation? This second line of criticism carries the wider implication that variationists should confine their extralinguistic discussions to statistical questions of survey method, while researchers interested in language and group affiliation should move over to interpretive sociolinguistics more completely. My hope is that this case study's necessary (rather than contingent) limitations carry implications at the first rather than at the second of these two levels.

FOOTNOTES

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(1) This is their theory:
'The individual creates his systems of linguistic behaviour so as to define himself both idiosyncratically and in relation to other people; so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, to the extent (a) that he is able to identify those groups (b) that he has sufficient access to them and the ability to analysis their systems (c) that his motivation is adequate, (d) that he is still young enough to change his behaviour and (e) that society provides him with feedback indicating what chance he has of success in his proposed identity' (Le Page 1980:1243-4)

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